



## **HEADQUARTERS CIVIL AIR PATROL MIDDLE EAST REGION UNITED STATES AIR FORCE AUXILIARY**

105 Crystal Spring Drive  
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### **Public Affairs Plan 2015**

#### **I. Introduction**

This annual plan represents the Middle East Region, Civil Air Patrol public affairs (PA) program and is required annually per CAPR 190-1 (7)(a). The plan includes a region-wide evaluation of the program, objectives, goals, and strategies. It is prepared by Maj Brenda Reed, director of public affairs, and Lt Col Karen Copenhaver, deputy director of public affairs, and approved by Col John Knowles, Middle East Region commander.

#### **II. Public Affairs Needs and Opportunities**

The Middle East Region (MER) encompasses the seven Civil Air Patrol (CAP) wings of Delaware, Maryland, National Capital, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia. This geographically diverse region includes our nation's capital and other major metropolitan areas, the mid-Atlantic coast, several major military installations, and the mountainous terrain of West Virginia. Economic differences in the region present challenges to conduct the congressionally-mandated missions of CAP, and to recruit and retain members to conduct those missions.

As of January 1, 2015, MER has 7,030 members (3,942 adults and 3,088 cadets) in 159 units throughout the region; this number includes state legislative members and those in 000 units. There are 176 public affairs officers (PAOs), both primary and assistants, on the membership roster at region, wing, and squadrons.

The region headquarters is responsible for oversight in program management and coordination among the wings and units to complete organizational missions. In an effort to develop a public affairs plan, the following elements are identified:

- **Strengths:** The MER membership is diverse and committed to the highest ideals of volunteer service. As evolving technologies continue to be developed, a motivated management team provides an interactive, cohesive effort to move forward using all possible resources and opportunities, while supporting, encouraging and mentoring across the region in an effort to meet CAP missions. The region has several wing PAOs with years of experience and region PA staff has more than 50 years experience in PA.
- **Weaknesses:** PAOs across the region experience conflicts with CAP duties and outside responsibilities of work and family. New unit PAOs are often untrained and inexperienced

in PA activities and responsibilities. Currently, several wing PAOs are new to the wing-level position. This is problematic at all levels when the lack of training results in noncompliance of PA directives.

- **Areas for Improvement:** PAOs require regular training, both formal and informal, along with easy-to-use tools for ready access to required information. PAOs need to feel part of a team with experienced PAOs serving as mentors to newer PAOs. Communication between region PA and wing PAOs needs to improve in order to conduct an ever evolving and complex program.
- **Opportunities:** MER is in a position for numerous high profile opportunities, especially with the nation's capital located within the region. Multiple military bases in the region provide opportunities to work with and gain knowledge from these different, but intricately woven, military organizations.
- **Threats:** Civil Air Patrol has experienced a decline in membership due to many factors, and so it is with the region. Additional threats include the busy lifestyles of current and prospective members and other available activities that can and do impact a division of available time. It is a widely known that many members serve in multiple positions, thereby spreading their time between responsibilities and, in some cases, reducing the ability to function at their best in one position.
- **Major Events:** Major events held within the region include Wreaths Across America, the International Air Cadet Exchange program, national Legislative Day, the winter command council meeting, and the air show at Joint Base Andrews. MER conducts the annual Region Cadet Leadership School, MER Cadet Competition, Region Staff College, Region Chaplain's College, Region Search and Rescue College, and the annual region conference which becomes a joint conference with a wing in the region every other year. Additionally, MER hosts three national cadet special activities: the MER Honor Guard Academy, MER National Flight Academy and the Civic Leadership Academy. Since these events provide opportunities to showcase CAP through the use of public relations, MER PA staff encourages all project officers to secure a PAO for each activity or request assistance to obtain one, ensuring an integrated public affairs effort is planned and implemented.

MER needs to improve training opportunities for wing PAOs, providing resources and experiences to encourage PA activity and success. MER PA staff need to encourage and guide wing PAOs (and subsequently influence unit PAOs through the wing PAOs) to fully engage in all aspects of PA activities, including, but not limited to, writing media releases, documenting activities through photographs, considering historical significance of PA work, engaging local members and community in social media, improving each PAO's personal development and meeting personal goals, and fulfilling CAP PA regulations and requirements. As PAOs experience success and the motivation of seeing their PA work published, they gain confidence to tackle new projects, increasing the level of the PA program region-wide. To accomplish this, MER PA staff must become role models for outstanding PA behaviors, using easily accessible tools and creating an environment in which all PAOs can communicate ideas and concerns freely while learning from others in the field.

### III. Effectiveness of 2014 Goals

The year 2014 was a year of transition for MER with a change of command and a change in public affairs officers, not only at the MER level but also over half of the wing PAOs. With any change, there can be lapses in activity, although MER public affairs continued smoothly as the MER deputy PAO maintained consistency with the PA program. However, these personnel changes resulted in some PA goals for 2014 to not be met. Successes in 2014 include the implementation of a PAO-only list-serve to facilitate easy communication between MER and wing PAOs, the development of a new MER website, and an increased social media presence.

### IV. Public Affairs Objectives

Middle East Region has established the following public affairs objectives for 2015:

- A. Support CAP national headquarters' strategic plans, including the PA strategic plans for marketing and branding through interactive communication and sharing information as a liaison between national and the wings.
- B. Support and mentor the PAOs of MER through interactive communication, counseling, and training opportunities. Act as liaison between national PA and the wings by sharing information which impacts CAP operations. Ensure compliance with CAP regulations, supplements, directives and requirements of higher headquarters.
- C. Role model exemplary PAO activities and use of emerging technologies and open source tools to further the PA goals and mentorship of less experienced PAOs.
- D. Encourage a friendly team atmosphere through co-sharing event planning and implementation. This team effort includes internal and external public relations activities and emergency services events.
- E. Increase visibility for MER members and events through increased use of social media, external media releases, submissions to CAP's *Volunteer Now*, and unit websites.
- F. Continue a cohesive and working relationship with the MER IT and webmaster to ensure the region website meets and/or exceeds the internal and external PA needs and general information needs as directed in CAP regulations.
- G. Promote and/or coordinate PAO support for region/national hosted activities as requested, including preparations for CAP's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- H. Develop a region PA crisis communications plan and assist subordinate wings in the development of the same to ensure a broad understanding of duties and responsibilities in times of emergencies.

### V. Public Affairs Goals and Strategies

The MER PA's role is primarily program management and support. The MER PAO has set the following nine goals for the region's PA program. Each goal is described, the measures of success are provided, and each goal lists which objective(s) it supports. The goals will be tracked by the MER PAO and reported to the MER commander.

- **Goal # 1: Each wing will have an active, trained primary PAO and assistant PAO who are progressing in the PAO specialty track and complying with CAPR 190-1 through**

**active recruitment and training. Progression through the PAO specialty track requires PAOs to train as PIOs; therefore, each wing PAO will be qualified as a PIO.**

Description: The success of the CAP PA program rests with having active and trained PAOs. MER PA will provide online training opportunities while mentoring wing PAOs individually on an as needed basis. Wing PAOs will be encouraged to recruit assistant wing PAOs who can be trained as successors as needed. There is a need for more members qualified as public information officers (PIO) and the new PA specialty track revision requires PAOs to train as PIOs.

Measure of Success: All seven wings will have an assigned PAO and assistant PAO who are working in the PAO specialty track. Currently all wings have a primary PAO and an assigned assistant. Therefore, this goal will be achieved when all primary PAOs attain at least a senior rating in the PA specialty track (currently four PAOs hold technician ratings; the remaining three hold master ratings) and all assistant PAOs obtain at least a technician rating (currently four assistant wing PAOs hold no specialty track rating). In addition, three of the seven wing PAOs are currently PIO-qualified with a fourth PAO in training. This goal will be achieved when all seven wing PAOs are PIO-qualified.

Supports PA Objectives: B, C, D

- **Goal # 2: MER PA staff and wing PAOs will embrace CAP national headquarters' branding initiatives by using the tools and templates provided on the CAP NHQ PA website.**

Description: NHQ PA has distributed a branding master plan and resource guide, including templates for signature blocks, business cards, media releases, and other tools used by PAOs. MER staff and wing PAOs will incorporate CAP branding into their PAO endeavors while encouraging wing staff, unit PAOs, and members to do the same.

Measure of Success: All wing PAOs and MER PA staff will use CAP recommended branding resources.

Supports PA Objectives: B, C, D

- **Goal # 3: MER PA will create formal and informal online training materials, to include social learning and just-in-time tools, for use by all PAOs to improve their skills. MER PA will conduct formal classroom training when requested or as needed.**

Description: PAOs in the region require training opportunities and tools to learn their trade. Given the large geographical area MER spans, formal classroom training is not always the best method for training new PAOs. MER PA will create online training materials which can be used by PAOs informally and for just-in-time learning including a library of training resources and videos, social learning, and mentoring opportunities.

Measure of Success: This goal will be initially successful when a training library becomes

available and its continued success will be measured by regular additions and updates to the resources available for PAO development. Usage of the tools will be monitored and measured through site statistics.

Supports PA Objectives: A, B, C

- **Goal # 4: MER PA staff will serve as PAO role models for all PAOs in the region through proper use of AP style, mentorship, adherence to PAO regulations, personal and professional development, and a team spirit.**

Description: MER PA staff and wing PAOs are considered to be experts in CAP public affairs with experience and training in proper CAP PA procedures. New PAOs look to the region and wings for guidance. MER PA will role model exemplary public affairs actions, encouraging and guiding wing PAOs to do the same so inexperienced PAOs within the region will have accurate role models for use of AP style, following CAP PA regulations, professional development, and team spirit.

Measure of Success: This goal will be achieved when all MER PA staff and wing PAOs demonstrate correct AP style usage, adhere and enforce CAP PA regulations and policies, progress towards CAP professional development awards through training, cooperate with requests for information in a timely manner, and participate regularly in discussions with wing PAOs.

Supports PA Objectives: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H

- **Goal # 5: Each wing will submit a 2015 public affairs plan and a 2015 crisis communications plan to MER PAO for review and input. MER PA will submit a 2015 public affairs plan and 2015 crisis communications plan to NHQ PA and the national PAO for review and input.**

Description: CAPR 190-1 requires all wing and region PAOs to annually submit both a public affairs plan and a crisis communications plan to the next echelon for review and input. Furthermore, the MER commander has set this as a goal for MER PA.

Measure of Success: MER PA and all seven wings will have both an approved public affairs plan and an approved crisis communications plan for 2015 in place by February 28, 2015.

Supports PA Objectives: B, C, H

- **Goal # 6: MER PA staff will actively pursue open dialogue with wing PAOs, engaging in discussions of matters important to wing PAOs, and create a team atmosphere within the PA scope of the region.**

Description: All PAOs within the region can learn from each other, including MER PA staff, and open dialogue will help further this informal, social learning as matters of importance are discussed in an open and noncritical manner with PAOs sharing experiences and knowledge

with each other. Wing PAOs have access to the MER-PAO list-serve as a vehicle for communicating with each other. MER PA will continue to use this method for 2015 in addition to any other means warranted for the situation.

Measure of Success: All PAOs on the MER-PAO list-serve will participate in conversations during 2015. While not all PAOs will get involved in every discussion, this goal will be considered successful when all PAOs participate on a regular basis throughout the year. The MER PAO will use the list-serve in lieu of a monthly staff conference call.

Supports PA Objectives: B, C, D

- **Goal # 7: MER PA, in conjunction with MER IT and the webmaster, will launch the new region website which will demonstrate an increase in MER-related news.**

Description: The new MER website is currently nearing completion and will be launched in 2015. MER PA staff, working with the webmaster, will ensure that the news on the site is current.

Measure of Success: This goal will be achieved when the MER website is launched and the news section has three new articles per month.

Supports PA Objectives: C, E, F, G

- **Goal # 8: MER PA, in conjunction with wings and NHQ PA, will promote and/or coordinate PA support for region and national activities within MER's geographic boundaries as needed or requested.**

Description: While NHQ PA often supplies its own support and photographers to national events located within the region, MER PA is available to serve when needed and as requested. MER PA will coordinate any PA assistance with local PAOs for both national and regional events.

Measure of Success: This goal will be considered successful when MER PA supports all MER-sponsored events through region, wing, or squadron PAOs, and, when requested, supports NHQ programs located within the region.

Supports PA Objectives: A, B, C, D, E, G

- **Goal # 9: MER PA will increase the visibility of the region, its members, and its events through an increased online presence with submissions to the *Volunteer Now*, social media outlets, and media releases.**

Description: Social media is currently the means through which many members get their information. MER PA will actively promote the activities of its members and units through regular postings on Facebook and Twitter. Additional visibility venues will be explored, such as Wikipedia for each wing, Instagram, Flickr, and emerging trends. Additionally, these

postings will favor driving traffic to the MER or wing/unit websites whenever possible through links. Regular submissions to the *Volunteer Now* and local outside media will be encouraged.

Measure of Success: This goal will be considered successful when the MER official Facebook and Twitter accounts have a minimum of two postings daily, all appropriate releases from units, wings, and region are submitted through eServices to the *Volunteer Now* and to outside media sources. The MER PAO will track likes and followers on social media with a goal to increase these numbers. On January 1, 2015, the official MER Facebook page had 668 likes and the official MER Twitter account had 112 followers. Increases of 40% for both accounts in 2015 will be considered successful (or an additional 267 likes on Facebook and 44 followers for Twitter).

Supports PA Objectives: A, C, D, E, G

## **VI. Summary**

This plan provides an overview of the current MER public affairs program, observations of the current PA environment, and goals and strategies for the program for the upcoming year. It is not meant to be a final plan, but one that will evolve as needed.

## **VII. Annual Review**

This plan will be reviewed each year in November for submission to region command in December. This will consist of a comprehensive review of the PA program, its successes, failures, areas for improvement and update goals/objectives for the next year.

## **VIII. Promulgation**

Upon approval of the MER commander, this plan will be communicated to CAP NHQ PA, the national PAO, every wing PAO in the region via email and posted to the public affairs section of the Middle East Region website.

**Submitted: 28 Jan 2015**

**Approved: 28 Jan 2015**

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